DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 142 742 08 CE 011 687

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TITLE Career Unit. The Art of Navajo Rug Weaving.
INSTITUTION San Juan Basin Area Vocational-Technical School, Cortez, Colo.
SPONS AGENCY Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education, Denver.; Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE [76]
NOTE 10p.; For related documents, see CE 011 670-672, CE 011 674-679, and CE 011 682-688

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *American Indians; *Career Exploration; Elementary Education; Lesson Plans; Social Studies Units
IDENTIFIERS Colorado; Navajos; *Weaving

ABSTRACT

This career exploration instructional unit on Navajo rug weaving is one of several resulting from the rural southwestern Colorado CEPAC Project (Career Education Process of Attitude Change). This unit consists of (1) five unit objectives (to recognize the importance of sheep in the Indians' life, to realize the time required to prepare wool for weaving, to learn where and how dyes are found and prepared, to recognize weaving tools and their uses, and to appreciate the artistic designs of Navajo rugs) and (2) a list of suggested teaching procedures and learning activities, e.g., field trip to a sheep ranch, films, visit from a Navajo weaver, etc. (EM)

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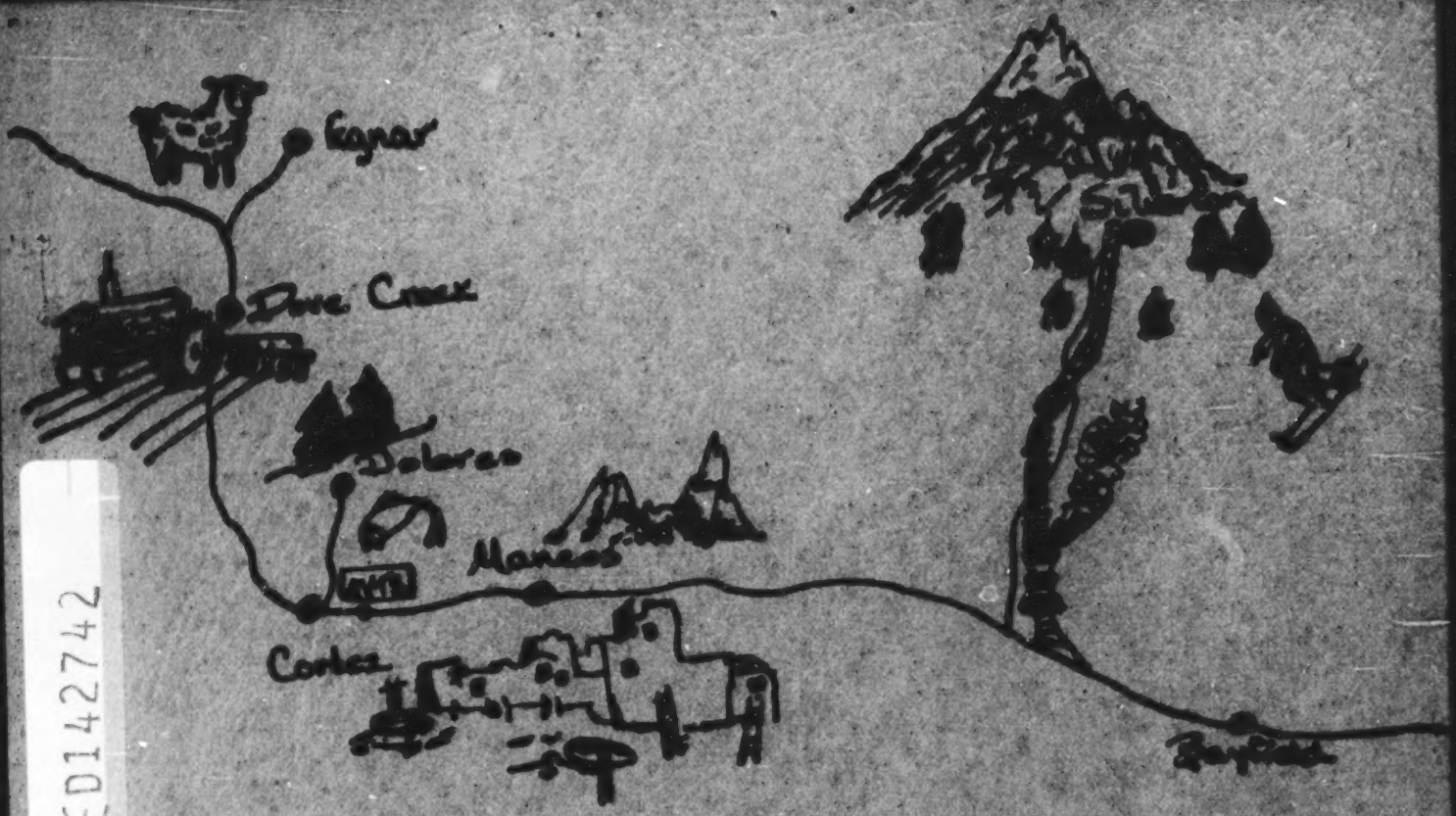

ED142742

C A R E E R U N I T

The Art of Navajo Rug Weaving

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CEPAC: Career Education-
A Process of Attitude Change

San Juan Basin Area
Vocational-Technical School
Cortez Colorado

CE011 684

FOREWARD

This career unit was prepared by Edna Robb, Nancy Parsley, Mary Kaye Robb, Carolyn Robb and taught in their classrooms as part of a comprehensive career education program. The CEPAC Career Education Project is a consortium in South-Western Colorado administered through the San Juan Basin Area Vocational-Technical School including the school districts of:

Dolores RE-4A, Dolores, Colorado
Mancos RE-6, Mancos, Colorado
Dolores County RE-1-J, Dove Creek, Colorado
San Juan County No. 1, Silverton, Colorado
Egnar No. 18, Egnar, Colorado
Montezuma-Cortez RE-1, Cortez, Colorado
Bayfield 10Jt-R, Bayfield, Colorado

The reader should note that the career education unit presented here was developed for a particular class and may or may not be adaptable to all situations. This material has been reproduced so that others may benefit from the endeavors of the author and the Career Education Project.

This publication was the result of cooperative efforts of ESEA Title III through the Colorado State Department of Education and Vocational Education Part D Exemplary through the Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education.

Special thanks are due Dr. Charles Beck, Acting Director of ESEA Title III and Jeanne Werschke, Supervisor of Career Education for the Colorado Department of Education and Lloyd Lawson, Assistant Director for Fiscal and Information Services and Dr. Bill Barnes, Supervisor of Career Education for the Colorado State Board for Community Colleges and Occupational Education.

We would like to thank the following superintendents for their support:

Dr. Joseph D. Hathaway
Julio Archuleta
Ralph Baldwin
Wayne Whitten
Vernon Leithauser
Ferne Whitten
Jim Matthews

THE ART OF NAVAJO RUG WEAVING

OBJECTIVES

1. To recognize how important sheep are in the life of the Indians.
2. To realize how much time it takes to prepare the wool before it can be woven into a rug.
3. To learn where the dyes are found and how they are prepared.
4. To recognize the tools used in weaving and tell what they are used for.
5. To appreciate the artistic designs the Navajo ladies weave into their rugs.

PROCEDURE

1. Take a field trip to a Sheep Ranch to observe the sheep and the art of sheep shearing. This must be done in the spring because that is when the sheep are sheared.
   A. Discuss Why are the sheep sheared?
      1. Heat - during the summer the sheep get too hot if they are not sheared and they may die.
      2. The wool is sold or used to weave a rug.
2. Show Films about the Indians and discuss their culture.
   A. Films
      1.
      2.
      3.
   B. Discuss why sheep are so important to the Navajo Indian.

1. They get the wool they need to weave their rugs.

2. They trade the lambs and wool for food and clothing.

3. They eat the meat.

3. Invite a Navajo lady into the classroom to tell the students how to prepare the wool for weaving, how to dye the wool, where she gets the dye and the tools used in weaving a rug. Be careful who you invite because not all Indians like to answer questions.

A. Preparing the wool

1. Washing the wool. This is done with the root of the yucca plant.

2. Carding. Wool is combed between the cards to straighten the fibers, also, to get the lumps out and clean it.

3. Spinning. This is done on a Spindle, this is to create a fine, tightly-spun, strong warp which is resistant to abrasion. Spinning between palms is time consuming but possible.

4. Dying.

5. Rolling into balls.

B. Each step can be demonstrated for the students. The students can help wash the wool and with the carders they can card the wool and get the dirt, twigs and snarls out. Large squares of burlap can be dyed by the students. They can also roll yarn into balls.

C. Dyes; Dyes come from roots, leaves, flowers and berries of different plants and trees. A dye chart may be borrowed to demonstrate what colores come from what plant. If a chart can not be found point out colors

in a rug. Mention just the plants that are familiar to your students.

C. Dyes.

1.	Juniper Berry	light light green
2.	Juniper Root	Gray
3.	Red Juniper Root	Mahogany
4.	Brown Onion Skin	Antique Gold
5.	Red Onion Skin	Light Gray
6.	Mistletoe	Greenish Gray
7.	Holly Berries	Purple Brown
8.	Sage Brush	Dull green

These are just a few of the plants and the colors that come from them.

9. Not all dyes come from plants. Some are bought at the Trading Post, these are called Analine Dye. The reason these dyes are used is because plants can not be found to make all the colors used.

D. Instruments used in Weaving

1. Loom - Navajo weaving is performed on a vertical loom. The weaver sits at the base on a pile of soft sheepskins.
2. The Case. This is a case to keep the equipment and tools in an orderly manner.
3. The Batten. The batten is one of the most cherished and basic weaving tools. It is used to seperate

warp sets so a waft may be passed. It is made of hardwood. It is a flattened, smoothed wooden tool.

4. The Weaving Fork. The weaving fork is another of the cherished tools and is used to beat the weft into position.
5. The Sacking Needle. This is used at the end of the weaving when inserting the weft is difficult.
6. Spindle. This is used to pull the fibers into a thin hank and twist them into yarn.

4. Take a field trip and look for leaves, roots, flowers, berries or bark used for the basic dyes. Before taking the students on this trip be sure they are going to be able to find these plants.
5. Take a Field trip to The Hogan to see a large loom and a real Hogan. Both of these were built by a Navajo man.
   A. Arrange to have a Navajo lady at the loom weaving and using the instruments previously studied.
   B. Study the different designs in the rugs. Some tell a story.
   C. Pick out the different colors that are in the many rugs. See if the students can pick out the natural dyes, vegetable dyes or Analine dye.
6. After the rugs are finished how do the Indians use them?
   A. For saddle blankets
   B. They trade them for food or clothing or to pay their bills at the Trading Post.

7. Place Mats can be woven out of construction paper. The place mats can be left plain or decorated with Indian designs.
8. Older classes can make a small loom and weave a small rug.
9. Thank-you notes should be written to:
   A. Owner of the sheep farm visited
   B. Shearer
   C. Indian who visited the classroom
   D. Owner of The Hogan
   E. Weaver at the loom.
10. The student can write a story about the steps in weaving a Navajo Rug.
11. Read the story "Lucy Learns To Weave: Gathering Plants"

THE NAVAJO RUG

Barbara J. Warren

Like pieces of fallen cloud, the sheep are scattered on the hillside.
In the summer's hot wind and the winter's cold, the women herds them.
To the hills in the day, to the corral at night,
To fresh grass and water she herds them.
The rug begins in Strength.

A storm drapes itself around the mountain. The sheep are restless.
They scatter. The woman tries to gather them. She cannot.
She kneels in the dust of the land to pray. The sheep come together.
To the rug is added Faith.

The sheep are sheared. The wool stands in fat bags against the hogan wall.
Now the carding begins. Short, quick strokes. Fibers straight. Dirt combed out.
Now the spinning begins. Turning, turning, turning, turning of the spindle.
While knowing fingers pull the wool into a strong, straight thread.
Now the washing begins: now the dyeing begins.
Into the rug goes Patience.

The rug grows slowly on the loom.
It's design, unwritten, has gathered itself in the mind of one
Who has long looked out upon the land
And seen it's ever-changing colors and patterns.
The rug is woven in Beauty.

The way to the trading post is long.
And when the women gets there, what will she buy?
Lenths of sateen and velvet that shine like shimmering jewel on the shelf?
New dishes, a cookingpot--hers is so old.
No! This and this and--yes--this for her children.
And this and this for her man.
For herself, not a thing.
The rug is finished in Love.

The woman is gone. You come to buy. The price is too much
No, my friend. Not for this rug. Not for what is in it.
All that the woman is, is in the rug.
All she thinks, all she believes, all her skills, all she dreams of and hopes for
Have been woven into one in this rug.
And for all this, the price is never too much. Because you see, my friend,
The rug is the woman.

The Relief Society Magazine
Volume 54, Number 1
January 1967

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project presented or reported herein was performed pursuant to a Grant from the U.S. Office of Education; Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Office of Education should be inferred.

The CEPAC Career Education Project was supported by the United States Office of Education, Department of Health, Education and Welfare under Part D Exemplary of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 and Title III of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and by the school districts participating.

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